REMARKS

In the August 27, 2004 Office Action, the Examiner noted that claims 1-18 were pending in the application; but claims 4-8, 12-16 and 18 had been withdrawn from consideration; rejected claims 1-3, 9-11 and 17 under the second paragraph of 35 USC § 112; rejected claims 1, 2, 9, 10 and 17 under 35 USC § 102(a); and rejected claims 3 and 11 under 35 USC § 103(a). In rejecting the claims, U.S. Patent 6,591,291 to Gabber et al. (Reference A in the August 27, 2004 Office Action) was cited. Claims 4-8, 12-16 and 18 have been cancelled and thus, claims 1-3, 9-11 and 17 remain in the case. The Examiner's rejections are traversed below.

Newly Cited Prior Art: U.S. Patent 6,591,291 to Gabber et al.

The Gabber et al. patent is directed to providing anonymous remailing and filtering of electronic mail by generating an alias source address for an email message. To enable reply messages to be routed to the sender, the alias source address is generated by encrypting the real source address. The encryption process may be modified so that a single sender may have multiple alias source addresses. In the embodiment illustrated in Fig. 4 and described at column 7, line 64 to column 9, line 8, the sender supplies a list of rejected alias source addresses for reply e-mails that are to be discarded (see the "YES" decision in block 440) and the remaining reply e-mails are redirected to the sender.

Rejections under 35 USC § 112, Second Paragraph

On page 2 of the Office Action, the Examiner required amendment of claims 1, 9 and 17 to clarify which mail address was being recited. The required change has been made in these claims (with the additional change of "a" to –the--). Therefore, withdrawal of the rejection of claims 1, 9 and 17 is respectfully requested.

In rejecting claims 2 and 10, the phrase "to specify use of the processing method" in claim 2 and a similar phrase in claim 10 was identified as unclear. This phrase has been amended to conform to amendments made to claims 1 and 9 and clarify that in addition to determining the processing method by matching the destination email with email addresses corresponding to the processing methods as recited in the independent claims, the processing method also may be specified based on a particular property of email. As a result, it is submitted that claims 2 and 10 meet the requirements of 35 USC § 112, second paragraph.

In the paragraph spanning pages 2 and 3 of the Office Action, claims 3 and 11 were rejected due to a lack of clarity regarding "how encryption is related to routing junk email." The specification describes the "decrypt" processing method from page 36, line 22 to page 37, line 8.

Another example of using encrypted email addresses is provided in Gabber et al. at column 6, line 22 to column 7, line 63 and column 8, lines 41-43. It is submitted that the claims do not need to recite how there is a relationship between encryption and routing email, just that the device includes "a unit to interpret an encrypted processing method" (e.g., claim 3, lines 1-2).

As discussed during the telephonic Examiner Interview on November 29, 2004, if the Examiner believes there are any remaining ambiguous limitations recited in the claims, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned by telephone to arrange an Examiner Interview prior to issuing another Office Action.

Rejections under 35 USC § 102(a)

On pages 3-4 of the Office Action, claims 1, 2, 9, 10 and 17 were rejected under 35 USC § 102(a) as anticipated by Gabber et al. Although Gabber et al. describes different possible processing methods, e.g., at column 8, lines 41-46, no suggestion has been found in Gabber et al. that a system would include more than one of these processing methods and some mechanism for choosing among the processing method. All that is disclosed by Gabber et al. is filtering email messages prior to rerouting messages that pass through the filter to users. On the other hand, the claims have always recited that email is processed according to a "processing method obtained as a result of the matching" (e.g., claim 1, last line). If the system uses only a single method for processing email as indicated by Gabber et al., there is no need for the matching operation that has always been recited in the independent claims. The independent claims have been amended to make explicit what was previously implicit, i.e., that there are "a plurality of processing methods available for processing the received email" (e.g., claim 1, lines 4-5). There is no suggestion of such flexibility in the system taught by Gabber et al. Therefore, it is submitted that claims 1, 9 and 17, as well as claims 2 and 10 which depend from claims 1 and 9, patentably distinguish over Gabber et al. It is noted that since the limitation added to the independent claims was implicit, the amendments to claims 1, 9 and 17 should not limit the scope of interpretation under the Doctrine of Equivalents.

Rejections under 35 USC § 103(a)

On page 4 of the Office Action, claims 3 and 11 were rejected under 35 USC § 103(a) as unpatentable over Gabber et al. Since claims 3 and 11 depend from claims 1 and 9, respectively, it is submitted that claims 3 and 11 patentably distinguish over Gabber et al. for the reasons discussed above with respect to claims 1 and 9.

Summary

It is submitted that the references cited by the Examiner, taken individually or in combination, do not teach or suggest the features of the present claimed invention. Thus, it is submitted that claims 1-3, 9-11 and 17 are in a condition suitable for allowance.

Finally, if there are any formal matters remaining after this response, the Examiner is requested to telephone the undersigned to attend to these matters.

If there are any additional fees associated with filing of this Amendment, please charge the same to our Deposit Account No. 19-3935.

Respectfully submitted,

STAAS & HALSEY LLP

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By: Richard A. Gollhofer

Richard A. Gollhofer
Registration No. 31,106

1201 New York Avenue, NW, Suite 700
Washington, D.C. 20005
Telephone: (202) 434-1500
Facsimile: (202) 434-1501